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READING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

In early June, a three day workshop entitled Reading Instruction for Student Empowerment (R.I.S.E.) gave “rise” to professional development facilitated by teachers who know what their fellow teachers need and utilize each day in the classroom. Alana Campion and Joe Duncan, teachers at Mary Queen of Peace School (MQP), provided practicing teachers with research based reading comprehension strategies proven to enhance student reading achievement scores. These unique workshops grew out of the Struggling Readers Program first sponsored by the Center for Catholic Education and the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton (UD) and facilitated for three years at MQP by Professors Judy Eggemeier and Connie Mathes.

Judy and Connie enthusiastically met with teachers multiple times after school during the school year. Teachers embraced the dynamic means suggested by the professors to fully engage students in the reading process through visualization, questioning, inferring, making connections, synthesizing information and determining importance. As the sessions proceeded teachers found multiple ways to excite students who at one time were non-readers. Teachers were also given the means to help students select books at the appropriate reading level for the students’ abilities. A generous grant from UD allowed for the purchase of books for teachers’ classrooms.

Inspired by students’ growing enthusiasm for the stories they found to enrich their lives, Alana and Joe, along with teacher, Jeri Robinson, and

principal, Debra Johnson, shared their journey with their voraciously reading students. As teachers and principals from other local schools became aware of student success through the Struggling Readers program, many clamored for Judy and Connie’s expertise. Realizing that two professors could not serve all of the needs presented, Jeri, Joe and Alana stepped up to teach what they had been taught. With the careful planning of UD and MQP believers, R.I.S.E. became a reality. Joe and Alana facilitated discussion with twenty-three teachers from eleven schools. After three mornings of explanation, practical examples, data demonstrating improved achievement and a rich exchange among participants and facilitators, all 23 participant course evaluations were marked “yes” in response to whether workshop expectations were met. One teacher commented, “These new skills will help students become lifelong readers.” This workshop was intended to ultimately inspire students to read in order to transform their lives and hopefully their communities. It certainly empowered teachers to improve professional development in the teaching community.



LALANNE REFLECTIONS

(The author of this article, Abigail Donah, recently completed the Lalanne Program and was asked to reflect on her personal experience.)

Most people discover Lalanne while attending the University of Dayton, but I found it through a search of the University Consortium of Catholic Education. I still remember my discussion two years ago with Jacinta Mergler, Director of Lalanne, who told me about a kindergarten teaching position in Indianapolis and then took the time to give me an overview of that city. I entered the program unsure of what to expect and excited for anything it would bring.

Lalanne is made up of four pillars that work together as one: teaching, professional development, community living, and spiritual growth. I would like to reflect on each pillar now that my Lalanne experience is coming to an end.

My spiritual journey is something that I believe has grown while in Lalanne. A weekly faith sharing time was decided upon as a community and it was quite interesting to see how people from various faith backgrounds came together to plan different activities for sharing. Seeing how other people interpret the Catholic religion has opened my eyes to new dimensions of my own faith.

Living in a community is quite different from living with roommates in college.



Since we are all teachers it was nice to be able to talk about daily challenges in our classrooms. It was nice to have others understand when we celebrated a great lesson or needed to vent about a behavior problem. The Indianapolis Lalanne community is unique because we were fortunate to live with the ECHO community, members of a service program from the University of Notre Dame in which they work in parishes as directors of religious education. I believe working with these people helped me to grow in my spirituality and sense of community.

I was able to grow the most in my teaching experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I was blessed to be able to have a very well behaved kindergarten class for my first year at Central Catholic. Since the students listened so well I was able to teach many concepts and strengthen my classroom management skills. One student was on an IEP with two identified special needs, which proved to be a challenge, but I learned a lot about the special education process and available services in a Catholic school. During the second year my class proved to be a little more tough in terms of inattentive students and those who could not sit still, but daily work on classroom routines and following directions had most doing what was expected by the end of the first quarter.

Lalanne has provided many opportunities for professional development. During the summers I was on the UD campus taking a wide variety of classes to help me become a better teacher. I took everything from The U.S. History of Catholic Education to Behavioral Management.

This August I will receive a Masters degree in the Teacher as Leader program with a concentration in Special Education. I feel very blessed to have been able to complete my Masters in two years and gain teaching experience at the same time. As I look back on my time in Lalanne I am surprised that it has gone by so quickly. I truly believe that time flies when you're having fun, which is definitely the way I would describe my Lalanne experience.

URBAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE CENTER



Counselor Shari Zahn and student
at Peacemakers year-end celebration



Working together!



Counselor Rhonda Mercs teaches
violence prevention curriculum at Mary
Queen of Peace, Gramont campus



Counselor Noelle Willey explains an art
project that later won first place at the
Young Artist Showcase

The UCDC ended its seventh successful year in urban Catholic schools, living our mission by providing culturally relevant learning opportunities for students and their families for emotional, physical, and spiritual growth. Here are some highlights of the past year.



Counselor Sandy Eisenhut with
students at year-end celebration

STUDENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT

During the process of conducting Whole Class Reviews a common theme emerged: Our Lady of the Rosary students and their families were in need of education about fitness and eating nutritionally balanced meals. Parents were surveyed about their knowledge of wellness and healthy meal preparation. An evening that

included nutritious food and fitness was planned.

On April 30, 2009, nearly thirty students, parents, and staff from Our Lady of the Rosary School attended Student Support's first Family Fit Night. Each student was given a healthy boxed dinner and led through a series of fitness and safety stations by Jessica Saunders of the Children's Medical Center of Dayton. In conjunction with the theme of "fruit" for the first Fit Night, parents were given a healthy meal incorporating this element of the food pyramid. They were educated about the benefits of adding fruit to their family's diet and given tips about how to add fruit to any meal. A hands-on demonstration using mangos and pineapples rounded out the event. Due to its success, this program will continue through the 2009-2010 school year with four Family Fit Nights scheduled.





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TEACHING AS MINISTRY

The Marianist Province of the United States sponsored a Teaching as Ministry (T.A.M.) experience for those involved in the ministry of education at Marianist schools July 28-31, 2009, at the University of Dayton.

T.A.M. provides an opportunity for participants to network with other Marianist educators, share the good things that are happening at their schools, reflect on their own educational ministry, gain insight and perspective on the Characteristics

of Marianist Education, and commit to making an impact on the Marianist character of their schools.

This summer's T.A.M. experience included 27 educators from 12 Marianist-sponsored schools. The experience was facilitated by George Lisjak, Director of Marianist Educational Studies and Partnerships, and Kathy Reece, a Marianist educator recently retired from Hackett Catholic Central High School in Kalamazoo, MI.